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## NOTES ON BIRD-MUSIC.

TOWARDS the latter end of changeful April, when winter has been fairly conquered by the returning warmth, is the beginning of the full development of Bird-music. Then the stream of song from our native birds, which has been gradually increasing from the virtual silence of winter, is reinforced by the arrival of our summer visitors. For the silence of winter is only comparative, and all through the dreary season—except for short intervals when frost binds the earth in iron fetters—there is bird-music to be heard. The Robin sings all through the winter months, and every now and then may be heard his companion, the Wren. And it only requires a gleam of sunshine to call forth the music of the Missel Thrush in the very midst of storm and cold. It is one of the treats of January and February to hear him during one of these intervals. Taking his stand on the top of some tall tree, he will pour forth his cheerful notes with a fine ring of wild enjoyment—a determination to be happy in spite of circumstances. It is only a little spell of fine weather between the snow and sleet, or hard frost, of the season, and yet he sings as if spring and nesting-time were already here. There is in the song a resemblance to that of blackbird and song thrush, but it lacks the luxuriance of phrase—meet for the leafy luxuriance of its surroundings—which we hear in the former; nor has it the reiterated, exulting happiness of the latter.

And there is much less variety. The songs of the three great musicians of the Thrush family are clearly defined and distinct from each other, just as are their eggs and nests; and yet, without a little careful observation, most people will confound the missel thrush with the blackbird and song thrush, or mix all three in hopeless mental confusion. A useful point for those to notice who wish to learn their songs is that the missel thrush sings first. Neither song thrush nor blackbird sings so early in the year; and I think the song thrush begins before the black-

bird. The special characteristic of the Song Thrush is its habit of frequent repetition. The repeated part consists, rarely of one, usually of two, three, or four notes, and is given from three to six times in rapid succession; then, perhaps without a pause, another phrase—if the word may be used—is repeated in a similar way. One of the bird's favourite repetitions, of which he never seems to tire, may easily be interpreted: 'Cheer up, cheer up, cheer up;' and this may be taken as the keynote and purpose of his music.

Richness and variety characterise the Blackbird's song: we would recognise the tone even if he sang the song of some other bird. This has led to the terms silvery and fluty applied to it: 'The blackbird fluteth in the elm,' which recalls the mellow clearness of his music; 'The blackbird's silvery tones,' which suggests the full richness of his voice.

Most birds seem to possess more or less of the imitative faculty; and even the blackbird, which has such a distinct and wonderful song of its own, is sometimes a mimic. I have also heard the skylark take the last four notes of the chaffinch's song and repeat them several times in succession as a part of his own; but whether this was imitation or coincidence I will not venture to say.

But our great mimic is the Starling. He will imitate many of our common songsters, and has been known to whistle for a dog, &c. There is a time when the starling forsakes his familiar haunts on the top of the old house with that convenient hole in the masonry which he entered to his nest. We miss his frequent song, which he was wont to give us from the corner of the roof or from the adjacent tree. He has gone to the moors to recruit after the cares and fatigues of family life. There he associates with the plover and curlew, and on his return reproduces perfectly the wild cry of the latter. And by the succeeding spring he will not have forgotten it, although then very busy imitating the blackbird and thrush. His various imitative snatches are

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intercalated with a peculiar guttural gurgling screaming of his own, accompanied by a shaking of wings and ruffling of neck feathers. There is something weird and mysterious about the starling as he sits giving utterance to these strange cries of his; there is even a touch of what is called 'uncanniness' in the North. 'Tha're an inwörd kind of bōrd,' remarked a Northumbrian pitman while gazing on one perched on a telegraph wire and giving vent to these peculiar sounds. And I think he meant to convey the idea that the starling is of a meditative turn, and knows a thing or two which he doesn't tell to everybody.

I have never experienced greater pleasure in the pursuit of ornithology than in learning the song of the Dipper. There is a special charm in the habits of the bird, and its haunts are among the loveliest of Nature's scenes. That it is so much less known than many others increases the fascination. For I find from my dippings into ornithological literature that this is so. Yarrell, for example, states that he had never seen a dipper alive; and that well-known naturalist, the Rev. J. G. Wood, states that he has only once found its nest and never heard it sing.

The dipper sings both early and late in the year. The first time I heard it was, I think, early in February. A dipper flying over the water disappeared beneath it, and came up again to settle on a stone at the edge of the stream. He sat there and sang, his almost insular rock splashed by the passing water—a pleasing song, sweet and cheerful, with its meet accompaniment of murmuring waters. A voice less rich and powerful than that of blackbird and song thrush, and less variety in the song, yet with a striking resemblance. There is the song thrush's habit of repetition, but less pronounced; while certain trills and turns recall to my mind the canary more than anything else.

A few hundred yards farther up the stream another sat on a stone washed by the frequent spray. His glorious white breast, set off by dark plumes, gleamed like snow while he poured forth his welcome notes. Another time a January walk down a rocky stream was enlivened by the cheery music of several as they winged their way over the water or settled on their favourite stones. And he may be heard in November, a time when there is little bird-music. As I wandered by the stream-side one hazy November day, the familiar gleam of white passed up the water before me. A dipper sat on a stone in mid-stream and cheered the November solitude with his music. And in December also, if the weather is mild, he may be heard.

There is an exhilarating wildness about the Curlew's cry, in harmony with the wild moorland where we usually hear him. There goes one sailing leisurely along on those great wings of his, uttering slowly his characteristic cry. Now he begins to descend, and the notes get quicker and shriller. They reach their maximum, and then he utters a few slowly, by way of finish.

Wonderful bird-music is to be heard from 'the swamp where hum the dropping snipe,' as we wander through their favourite marshy haunts during the breeding season.

It was long before I could identify the strange

sounds. But it was soon perceived to come from a bird flying round and round rather high in the air, and rising and falling alternately in its flight. Somehow or other, a line written by the poet Hogg, in which he speaks of 'the airy bleeter's rolling howl,' associated itself in my mind with this strange cry; I was convinced he was referring to the same bird. And then I found that the Snipe is sometimes called the bleeter, and the mystery was solved.

The peculiar sound emitted by the snipe during the breeding season is doubtless a thing very difficult to describe accurately; but I think no single word in our language comes so near to it as 'hum.' For my own part, if asked to describe the sound, I should say: 'Imagine the hum of the bee magnified very many times, and then mingled with a little of the peculiar tremulous stammering characteristic of the bleating of the lamb and kid.' This latter quality has led to the term 'bleeter,' applied to the snipe in Hogg's line, and to the French name, *chèvre volante*; also to the term 'lamming' used in Norfolk to denote its cry.

After wandering among the swamps many times during the breeding season listening to the strange sounds, and watching the airy ascending and descending curves, I was fast coming to the conclusion that the asserted bleating was a myth, or at least an exaggeration, when the resemblance struck me in a convincing manner.

Most diminutive and beautiful of our native birds is the dainty Gold-crest; not rare, but somewhat difficult to see on account of its small size and retiring habits. Away among the fir-tops, especially in the autumn, its shrill chirp draws attention to the tree-tops. But it is one of those deceptive sounds so difficult to follow. Now it appears to come from that tree in front; but when attention is directed there, it seems to come from behind. At last the bird is seen hopping briskly about among the higher branches of a larch-tree. Perhaps, if fortune favours, the song is heard also. But it is very low and soft, and therefore easily missed. The first time I heard it was from the middle of a thick hawthorn hedge, where I got a sight of the bird at the same time. On another occasion, the soft notes came from a fir-tree on a hazy November day.

A great contrast to these notes so sweet and low of the gold-crest is the song of another tiny bird, the Wren. Its song is loud and clear—a perfect little torrent of music. One of the most difficult of ornithological facts to realise is that it comes from such a tiny throat. The wren gets through its song in a somewhat business-like manner; he has something to say, and he says it right off.

The Larks are an interesting family of songsters. Chief among them is the familiar skylark, famous for its early rising. 'Stir with the lark to-morrow, gentle Norfolk,' says King Richard, when he would exhort his follower to make an early start.

To be urged to early rising by an appeal to the lark was one of the pet aversions of Charles Lamb. That we should go to bed with the lamb and rise with the lark was one of those popular fallacies which he exposed so humorously. And no doubt the lark is unconsciously early in this

matter of rising; yet it is good to hear it when the summer day is still young. And perhaps even Lamb, had he been able to enjoy the lark's music without rising from his couch and losing the thread of his waking dreams, might have even praised him for his early song. The little sea-side resort of Silloth, on the Cumberland coast, is a place where this refinement of enjoyment can be obtained. Its main street runs parallel with the Solway Firth, and between it and the sea is a strip of waste sandy ground covered with grass and wild-flowers, and diversified with hillocky sand links. Here larks abound, and all the summer day from early morn till evening fill the air with their melody. And in the very early morning we may, just awakened from slumber, lie and listen with open window to the sweet sounds which herald the summer day. Motion seems an essential part of the skylark's music, and so it is with others of the family.

In the song of the treelark we find a wonderful combination of the poetry of motion and the sweetness of melody. Sometimes he may be heard singing seated on the tree-top; but if watched, will presently be seen to rise into the air. He will ascend some twenty or thirty yards in silence, then turn and begin to sing. Slowly, with outspread wings, he returns, pouring out a succession of sweet notes: he reaches the tree-top, and finishes with a few notes of melting sweetness, long drawn out.

The song of the meadow-lark, inferior in tone and variety to the sky- and tree-larks, is yet one we love to hear. It is best when there are many together and they can be both seen and heard. I have heard them to greatest perfection on a Northern moor where dwarf birch grew among the heather, and graceful yellow globe flowers shed a golden glory around. Dozens of meadow-larks were rising on all sides, and descending, singing as they dropped slowly down, and making the air vibrate with their frequent notes. Their lively music was varied by the call of the cuckoo and the wild sweetness of the curlew's whistle.

## THE IVORY GATE.\*

By WALTER BESANT.

### CHAPTER III.—THE SELECT CIRCLE.

At half-past nine on this Saturday evening, the parlour of the *Salutation Inn*, High Holborn, contained most of its customary visitors. They came every evening at eight: and they sat till eleven, drinking and talking. In former days every tavern of repute kept such a room for its own select circle; a club, or society, of habitués, who met every evening, for a pipe and a cheerful glass. In this way all respectable burgesses, down to fifty years ago, spent their evenings. Strangers might enter the room, but they were made to feel that they were there on sufferance: they were received with distance and suspicion. Most of the regular visitors knew each other: when

they did not, it was tavern politeness not to ask: a case is on record of four cronies, who used the *Cock* in Fleet Street for thirty years, not one knowing either the name or the trade of the other three. Yet when one died the other three pined away. This good old custom is now decayed. The respectable burgess stays at home, which is much more monotonous. Yet there may still be found a parlour here and there with a society meeting every evening all the year round.

The parlour of the *Salutation* was a good-sized room, wainscoted and provided with a sanded floor. It was furnished with a dozen wooden chairs, and three small round tables, the chairs disposed in a circle so as to prevent corners or cliques in conversation. Sacred is the fraternity, liberty, and equality of the parlour. The room was low, and, in the evenings, always hot with its two flaming unprotected gas jets: the window was never opened except in the morning, and there was always present a rich perfume of tobacco, beer, and spirits, both that anciently generated and that of the day's creation.

Among the frequenters—who were, it must be confessed, a somewhat faded or decayed company—was, to put him first because he was the richest, the great Mr Robert Hellyer, of Barnard's Inn, usurer or money-lender. Nobody quite likes the profession—one knows not why. Great fortunes have been made in it; the same fortunes have been dissipated by the money-lenders' heirs. Such fortunes do not stick, somehow. Mr Hellyer, for instance, was reputed wealthy beyond the dreams of the wildest desire. It was also said of him, under breath and in whispers and envious murmurs, that should a man borrow a five-pound note of him, that borrower would count himself lucky if he escaped with the loss of seventy-five pounds; and might generally expect to lose the whole of his household furniture, and the half of his income, for the rest of his natural life. To be sure, he sometimes had losses, as he said himself, with a groan; as when an unscrupulous client jumped off the Embankment, when he had not paid more than fifty pounds on the original five; or when a wicked man sold off his furniture secretly, in contempt of the bill of sale, and got clean out of the country with his wife and children. But on the whole he did pretty well. It was further said, by old clients, that his heart was a simple piece of round granite, for which he had no use, and that he made money out of it by letting it out at so much an hour for a paving mallet.

Mr Robert Hellyer was not a genial man or a cheerful or a pleasant man to look upon: he neither loved nor comprehended a jest: he never smiled: he kept his mind always employed on the conduct of his business. Every night—forgive the solitary weakness—he drank as much as he could carry. In appearance, he was red-faced, thick-necked, and stout: his voice was thick even in the morning, when he was under no compulsion to thickness: it was believed by his friends that his education had been imperfect: perhaps because he never gave anybody reason to suppose that he had ever received any education at all. To such men as Mr Hellyer, who every night take much strong drink and on no occasion whatever take any exercise, sixty is the grand

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climacteric. He was, a year ago, just fifty-nine. Alas! he has not even reached his grand climacteric. Already he is gone. He was cut off by pneumonia, or apoplexy, last Christmas. Those who saw the melancholy cortège filing out of the narrow gates of Barnard's Inn, mournfully remarked that none of his money was taken with him, and asked what happiness he could possibly find in the next world, which he would begin with nothing—nothing at all—not even credit—an absolute pauper.

Mr Robert Hellyer sat on one side of the empty fireplace. On the opposite side, a great contrast to his coarse and vulgar face, sat an elderly man, tall, thin, dressed in a coat whose sleeves were worn to shininess. His face was dejected: his features were still fine: he was evidently a gentleman. This person was a barrister, decayed and unsuccessful: he lived in a garret in Gray's Inn. There are a good many wrecks at the Bar, but few quite so forlorn as this poor old man. He still professed to practise, and picked up a guinea now and then by defending criminals. On these casual fees he managed to live. His clothes were threadbare: it was many years since he had had a greatcoat: on rainy and cold days he had a thin cape which he wore over his shoulders. Heaven knows how he dined and breakfasted; every evening, except in the hot days of summer, he came to this place for light and warmth. Unless he was very poor indeed, he called for a pint of old and mild and read the day's paper. Sometimes he talked, but not often: sometimes one or other of the company would offer him a more costly drink, which he always accepted with all that was left to him of courtesy. Outside, he had no friends: they had all forgotten him or died—it is very easy for a poor man to be forgotten: he had no relations: they had all died, emigrated, and dispersed; the relations of the unsuccessful are easily lost. When he talked, he sometimes became animated, and would tell anecdotes of the Bar and of the time when he was called, nearly fifty years ago, by the Benchers of Gray's Inn. What had become of the hopes and ambitions with which that young man entered upon the profession, which was to lead him to the parlour of the *Salutation* and the company that gathered there—and to the bare and miserable garret of Gray's Inn, forgotten and alone?

Another man, also elderly, who sat next to the barrister, was a gentleman who sold an excellent business and retired, in order to betake himself more completely to toying. He drank in three taverns during the day. One was in Fleet Street, where he took his chop at three: one was near Drury Lane Theatre, where he dallied with a little whisky from five to nine: and this was the third. He was a quiet, happy, self-respecting, dignified old man. In the evening, he spoke not at all—for sufficient reasons: but he benevolently inclined his head if he was addressed.

Next to him sat a younger man, a solicitor, whose practice consisted of defending prisoners in the Police Courts. He had with him two friends, and he had a confident swagger, which passed for ability. Next to him and his friends was a house agent, who had been a member for an Irish borough: and there was a gentleman, whose wife sang in music halls, so that this

fortunate person could—and did—sit about in taverns all day long. His appearance was that of a deboshed City clerk, as he was. Not to mention other members of the company, Checkley was there, occupying a chair next to the money-lender.

Here he was called Mr Checkley. He came every evening at nine o'clock, Sundays included. Like the money-lender, he wanted his little distractions, and took them in this way. Here, too, he was among those who respected him, not so much on account of his public and private virtues, or for his eminence in the law, as his money. It is not often that a solicitor's clerk becomes a 'warm' man, but then it is not often that one of the calling deliberately proposes to himself early in life to save money, and lives till seventy-five steadily carrying out his object. If you are good at figures, you will understand how Mr Checkley succeeded. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five he had an income which averaged about seventy-five pounds. He lived upon fifty pounds a year. From twenty-five to thirty-five he made an average of one hundred and fifty pounds: he still lived upon fifty pounds a year. At thirty-five he was induced by prudential considerations to marry: the lady, considerably his senior, had a thousand pounds. She was even more miserly than himself, and in a year or so after marriage, she fell into a decline, owing to insufficient nourishment, and presently expired. On the whole he calculated that he was the better man for the marriage by a thousand pounds. From thirty-five to forty-five his income rose to two hundred pounds: it then for twenty-five years stood at three hundred pounds a year: at the age of seventy Mr Dering gave him four hundred pounds. Therefore, to sum up, he had put by out of his pay the sum of £11,675—and this without counting the compound interest, always mounting up from his investments, which were all of a careful kind such as he understood: tenement houses, of which he had a good number: shares in building societies: money lent on bills of sale or on mortgage. At home—Mr Checkley lived on the ground floor of one of his own houses—he grew more miserly as he grew older. The standard of luxury is not high when fifty pounds a year covers all: but of late he had been trying to keep below even that humble amount. He conducted his affairs in the evening between his office hours and nine at his own house, or among the people where his property lay. It was in the district, visited by few, lying east of Gray's Inn Road: his own house was in a certain small square, a good half of the houses in which belonged to him.

At nine o'clock he arrived at the tavern. Here his drinks cost him nothing. A custom had grown up in the course of years for the money-lender to consult him on the many difficult points which arise in the practice of his profession. He was one of those who like to have one foot over the wall erected by the law, but not both. In other words, he was always trying to find out how far the law would allow him to go, and where it called upon him to stop. With this view he schemed perpetually to make his clients sign bonds under the delusion that they meant a hundredth part of what they really did mean. And as, like all ignorant men, he had the most



profound belief in the power and the knowledge and the chicanery of lawyers, he was pleased to obtain Checkley's advice in return for Checkley's drinks.

It was a full gathering. The old clerk arrived late: he was gratified at hearing the ex-M.P. whispering to his friends that the new arrival was worth his twenty thousand pounds if a penny. He swelled with honourable pride. Yes. Twenty thousand pounds! And more—more. Who would have thought, when he began as an office boy, that he could ever achieve so much?

The money-lender, bursting with a new case, real or supposed, took his pipe out of his mouth and communicated it in a hoarse whisper.

'Suppose'—it began.

'Then'—Checkley replied when the case was finished—'you would lay yourself open to a criminal prosecution. Don't you go so much as to think of it. There was a case twenty-five years ago exactly like it.' The remarks of the judge were most severe, and the sentence was heavy.

'Ah!' The usurer's red face grew redder. 'Then it can't be thought of. Pity, too. There's a house full of furniture and a shop full of stuff. And a young man as it would do good to him just to start fair again. Pity.—Put a name to it, Mr Checkley.'

'Rum. Hot. With lemon,' replied the sage. 'You get more taste in your mouth, more up-liftin' for your heart, as they say, more strengthenin' for the stomach, better value all round for your money out of rum than any other drink that I know.'

At this point, and before the waiter could execute the order, voices and steps were heard outside the room. The voices of two men. That of one loud, eager, noisy. That of the other quiet, measured, and calm.

Checkley sat upright suddenly and listened.

'That is young Cambridge,' said the old barrister. 'I thought he would be here—Saturday night and all. He smiled, as if expectant of something, and drank off the rest of his beer at a draught.'

'Most distinguished Cambridge man,' whispered the ex-M.P. to his friends. 'Wanst a Fellow of Cambridge College. Great scholar. Ornament to any circle. Dhrinks like an oyster. Son of a Bishop too—Son of an Irish Bishop—Talks Greek like English. He'll come in directly. He's taking something outside. He's always half-dhrunk to begin, and quite dhrunk to finish. But he only talks the better—being Oirish. Most remarkable man.'

The voice of this distinguished person Checkley knew. But the other voice. That he knew as well. And he could not remember whose voice it was. Very well indeed he remembered the sound of it. Some men never forget a face: some men never forget a shape or figure: some men never forget a voice: some men never forget a handwriting. A voice is the simplest thing, after all, to remember, and the most unchanging. From eighteen till eighty a man's voice changes not, save that in volume it decreases during the last decade: the distinguishing quality of the voice remains the same to the end.

'Have a drink, my dear fellow.' That was the voice of the Pride of Cambridge.

'Thanks. I don't want a drink.'

Whose voice was it? Checkley sat up eager for the door to be opened and that doubt to be resolved.

It was opened. The two men came in first, the Cambridge man leading the way. He was a good-looking, smooth-faced man of thirty-two or so, with bright blue eyes—too bright—a fine face, full of delicacy and mobility, a high, narrow forehead, and quick sensitive lips; a man who was obviously in want of some one to take him in hand and control him: one of those men who have no will of their own, and fall naturally before any temptation which assails them. The chief temptation which assailed Freddy Carstone—it seems to stamp the man that his friends all called him Freddy—a Freddy is amiable, weak, beloved, and given to err, slip, fall, and give way—was the temptation to drink. He was really, as the ex-M.P. told his friends, a very fine scholar: he had been a Fellow of his college, but never received any appointment or office of Lecturer there on account of this weakness of his, which was notorious. When his Fellowship expired, he came to London, lived in Gray's Inn, and took pupils. He had the reputation of being an excellent coach if he could be caught sober. He was generally sober in the morning; often a little elevated in the afternoon; and always cheerfully—not stupidly—drunk at night.

'You must have a drink,' Freddy repeated.—'Not want a drink? Hang it, old man, it isn't what you want, it's what you like. If I only took what I wanted, I should be—what should I be? Fellow and Tutor of the college—very likely Master—most probably Archdeacon—certainly Bishop. Wasn't my father a Bishop? Now, if you take what you like, as well as what you want—what happens? You go easily and comfortably down hill—down—down—down—like me. Tobogganing isn't easier: the switchback railway isn't more pleasant. Always take what you like.'

'No—no, Freddy; thanks.'

'What? You've got ambitions still? You want to be climbing? Man alive! it's too late. You've stayed away from your friends too long. You can't get up. Better join us at the *Salutation* Club. Come in with me. I'll introduce you. They'll be glad to have you. Intellectual conversation carried on nightly. Romantic scenery from the back window. Finest parlour in London. Come in and sample the Scotch.—Not want a drink? Who ever saw a man who didn't want a drink?'

The other man followed, reluctantly—and at sight of him Checkley jumped in his chair. Then he snatched the paper from the hands of the ancient barrister and buried his head in it. The action was most remarkable and unmistakable. He hid himself behind the paper. For the man whom the Cambridge scholar was dragging into the room was none other than Athelstan Arundel—the very man of whom Mr Dering had been speaking that very afternoon: the very man whose loss he had been regretting: the man accused by himself of forgery. So great was his terror at the sight of this man, that he was fain to hide behind the paper.

Yes: the same man: well dressed, apparently, and prosperous—in a velvet jacket and a white waistcoat, with a big brown beard—still carrying himself with that old insolent pride, as if he had never forged anything: looking not a day older, in spite of the eight years that had elapsed. What was he doing here?

'Come in, man,' said Freddy again. 'You shall have one drink at least, and as many more as you like.—Robert, two Scotch and soda.—We haven't met for eight long years. Let us sit down and confess our sins for eight years. Where have you been?'

'For the most part—abroad.'

'You don't look it. He who goes abroad to make his fortune always comes home in rags, with a pistol in his coat-tail and a bowie-knife in his belt. At least we are taught so. You wear velvet and fine linen. You haven't been abroad. I don't believe you've been farther than Camberwell. In fact, Camberwell has been your headquarters. You've been living in Camberwell—on Camberwell Green, which is a slice of Eden, with—perhaps—didn't pretty Polly Perkins live on Camberwell Green?—for eight long years.'

'Let me call upon you in your lodgings, where we can talk.'

'I haven't got any lodgings. I am in Chambers—I live all by myself in Gray's Inn.—Come and see me. I am always at home in the mornings—to pupils only—and generally at home in the afternoon to pupils and toppers and Lushingtons.—Here's your whisky. Sit down. Let me introduce you to the company. This is a highly intellectual society—not what you would expect of a Holborn Parlour. It is a club which meets here every evening—a first-class club. Subscription, nothing. Entrance fee, nothing. Order what you like.—Don't pretend not to know your brother-members.—Gentlemen, this is my old friend, Mr Athelstan Arundel, who has been abroad—on Camberwell Green—for the sake of Polly Perkins—for eight years, and has now returned.'

The ex-M.P. nudged his friends to call their attention to something good. The rest received the introduction and the remarks which followed in silence.

'Arundel, the gentleman by the fireplace, he with the pipe—is our Shylock, sometimes called the Lord Shylock.' The money-lender looked up with a dull and unintelligent eye: I believe the allusion was entirely above his comprehension.—'Beside him is Mr Vulpes—he with his head buried in the paper—you'll see him presently. Mr Vulpes is advanced in years, but well preserved, and knows every letter of the law: he is, indeed, an ornament of the lower branch. Vulpes will let you a house—he has many most charming residences—or will advance you money on mortgage. He knows the law of landlord and tenant and the law regarding Bills of Sale. I recommend Vulpes to your friendly consideration.—Here is Senex Bibulus Benevolens.' The old gentleman kindly inclined his head, being too far gone for speech. 'Here is a most learned counsel, who ought, had merit prevailed, to have been by this time Lord Chancellor, Chief Justice, Judge or Master of the Rolls, or Queen's Counsel at least. So far he is still a Junior, but we hope for his speedy advancement.—Sir, I entreat the

honour of offering you a goblet of more generous drink.—Robert, Irish whisky and a lemon for this gentleman.—There'—he pointed to the ex-M.P., who again nudged his friends and grinned—'is our legislator and statesman, the pride of his constituents, the darling of Ballynacuddery till they turned him out.—There'—he pointed to the deboshed clerk—'is a member of a great modern profession, a gentleman with whom it is indeed a pride to sit down. He is Monsieur le Mari: Monsieur le Mari complaisant et content.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said the gentleman indicated. 'If you want to talk Greek, talk it outside.'

'I cannot stay,' said Athelstan, looking about the room with scant respect. 'I will call upon you at your Chambers.'

'Do—do, my dear fellow.' Athelstan shook hands and walked away. 'Now, there's a man, gentlemen, who might have done anything—anything he might have done. Rowed stroke to his boat. Threw up everything eight years ago and went away—nobody knew why. Sad to see so much promise wasted. Sad—sad. He hasn't even touched his drink. Then I must—myself.' And he did.

Observe that there is no such lamentation over the failure of a promising young man as from one who has also failed. For, by a merciful arrangement, the failure seldom suspects himself of having failed.

'Now, Mr Checkley,' said the barrister, 'he's gone away and you needn't hide yourself any longer—and you can let me have my paper again.'

Mr Checkley spoke no more that evening. He drank up his rum-and-water, and he went away mightily perturbed. That Athelstan Arundel had come back portended that something would happen. And like King Cole's prophet, he could not foretell the nature of the event.

## INSTINCT.

On the threshold of this subject we are met by the difficulty of defining the term. Darwin says: 'An action which we ourselves should require experience to enable us to perform, when performed by an animal, more especially by a very young one without any experience, and when performed by many individuals in the same way, without their knowing for what purpose it is performed, is usually said to be instinctive.' All writers on the subject agree that Instinct exists prior to all individual experience, and is in a state of perfection from the very first.

The biological law by which all living creatures tend to repeat themselves is called heredity, and by well-ascertained facts it extends over all the functions of the organisms, both internal and external, and the most unobservant must be aware of this truth. From the lowest organisms to the most highly developed, each animal receives from its parents certain kinds of senses. In the formation of instincts, heredity reigns supreme, for it conserves and accumulates, thus producing stability, and fixing what at first was acquired and variable. Longevity is not

due to climate, race, or the care we take of ourselves, but to heredity, and life-assurance offices recognise this fact by asking the age at death of our ancestors.

Immunity from contagious diseases, muscular strength, energy, stammering, lisping, loquacity, harelip, insanity, phthisis, &c., are all transmitted. Habits are transmitted; and Darwin gives a well-marked case which came under his notice of a man who moved his fingers in a peculiar manner when excited, and who transmitted the trick to his eight children. Blumenbach avers that 'an injury such as a badly-set finger may be inherited.' The Eskimos cut off the tails of their dogs, and the pups are often born tailless. Manx cats, which have no tails, are supposed to have had a similar origin. Accidental modifications, however, tend to return to the normal type and are not perpetuated. Instincts are not rigid, but admit of modification, and are plastic in adapting themselves to changed conditions in the life of the individual, and also in the life of the species, whenever these variations exist for so lengthened a period as to call into operation the laws of heredity.

The two great causes of variability are—external surroundings and domestication; and it is by the latter that the action of man is more powerful to effect changes than Nature; for, as hereditary modifications occur frequently, man, through selection, is able to accumulate these slight variations, and thus produce a new variety, which will tend to propagate its new form. Wheat, which is one of our oldest cultivated plants, still yields new varieties; and our oldest domesticated animals are capable of fresh modifications. Domestic instincts are by some said to be long-continued and compulsory habits which have become transmitted; but this cannot be altogether true, for the teaching of a dog to point would have occurred to no one had not some dog shown a well-marked tendency, and which, after all, would merely have been an exaggeration of the attitude of animals about to spring on their prey. Instincts are unconscious forms of intelligence. The white butterfly will lay her eggs on the cabbage plant, but she cannot know why she does it. A young squirrel has its storehouse before it can have any experience of winter, and a duckling will make for the water although hatched by a hen. Instinct never compares or judges, but advances with certainty to its goal. The cuckoo places her eggs in other birds' nests because she lays them at intervals of three days, and were she to sit on them the hatching would be too prolonged, as there would be eggs of different ages in the same nest, and as she migrates at a very early period few young would in consequence be reared. In America, as a rule, the cuckoo hatches her eggs, but occasionally she adopts the plan of her European cousin, and probably in time will adopt it altogether. The young cuckoo has the instinct to thrust out of the nest its foster-brothers in order that it may get sufficient food. This act was probably caused in the first place by unintentional restlessness, which was improved upon and transmitted.

Organic instincts are sometimes lost under domestication, as we see in young chickens which have lost that fear of dogs and cats which

must originally have been instinctive in them; and there are some breeds of fowls which have lost the sense of sitting on their eggs. In incubation it is difficult to conceive that the animal could have had any intelligent idea of hatching the contents of the eggs, and it was probably due to the feeling of protection; those that cuddled their eggs most would have a larger offspring, and the instinct would thus be developed by natural selection. Even after a lengthened period of domestication natural instincts will persist, as is seen in the ass and the camel disliking to cross streams of water, both animals having originally come from desert countries where water is scarce. Lambs will skip on the smallest hillock, and this is a relic of their former Alpine habits. It is related of a little dog that an old piece of wolf-skin having been placed before it, the animal was convulsed with fear—a fact which can only be explained by the hereditary transmission of dread of that animal.

Acquired instincts are transmitted, but it takes about four generations to fix them. Without the heredity of acquired instincts, man in attempting to domesticate animals would have laboured in vain. The pups of pointers, collies, retrievers, and spaniels will act as their ancestors have done when taken out for the first time. A young fox in a country where they have been much persecuted will show more cunning on first coming out of its hole than an old one living in the midst of less dangerous surroundings. Large birds in inhabited lands are more shy than small ones, simply because they are more shot at, whereas in uninhabited countries they are equally fearless. Some instincts are stronger than others, and we may frequently observe the struggle going on between them, as when a dog rushes after a rabbit, is rebuked, hesitates, pursues again, or returns to his master; or when a bitch hesitates between following her owner or returning to her pups. The maternal instinct is strong in all animals, and yet it has to yield to the migratory, the offspring being left to perish miserably. It may be mentioned that birds when migrating fly as a rule by night, and in some species the young ones do not accompany the older, and must therefore perform their first journey, sometimes over immense tracts, without guidance. Darwin suggests that migration is due either to the feeling of pleasure or pain, or is the result of the force of inheritance. Audubon relates the case of a pinioned goose starting at the proper moment on foot for its long journey.

Every variation of instinct that places an animal in a better position to defend itself against new enemies or to seize some new prey is a clear gain, and will render it likely to survive under more complex surroundings. The grouse of North America burrow a tunnel just below the surface of the snow, sleeping securely at one end, and when any enemy approaches the mouth, the bird to escape has only to fly through the thin covering of snow. This action was probably due originally to the craving for warmth or concealment, or both, and the birds making the longest tunnel would the more easily survive, and thus the instinct would be perpetuated by natural selection. A plover with a broad



will, when frightened, pretend to be wounded, thus drawing the attention on herself while her young escape. This action was an intelligent one at first, due to the strength of the maternal feeling. Those parents who adopted this plan would raise a larger number of young than the more stupid, and when in time the young birds became mothers, the tendency to act in a similar manner would be transmitted.

It is not a universal law that each organ and tissue of the animal has a special function, and that from these are developed the instincts. If it were true that from the physical form the mental form arose, and that the organisation corresponded exactly with the instincts, each time the organisation differed the instincts would also vary; but this is not the case, for American and European beavers are alike outwardly, but the one builds and the other burrows. Spiders have the same organs for weaving their web, but the methods adopted are different, and some do not weave at all but merely live in holes. Certain species of wasps lay up a store of spiders to feed their larvæ, and to enable them to do this the spider is stung on a certain spot, so that it is not killed outright but merely paralysed, and is thus kept without decomposing until the young are hatched. This is the result either of instinct or of the form of the wasp being such that the sting naturally strikes the proper spot.

In the following remarks on ants we have derived our information chiefly from Sir John Lubbock's book on the subject.

It would be a serious error to believe that all instincts are due to habits acquired in one generation, and transmitted by inheritance to another, for some of the most wonderful instincts could not have arisen in this manner, as, for example, those of the working or sterile ant. These differ greatly in structure and instinct from the males and fertile females, yet, from being barren, they cannot have progeny. Again, the neuters differ not only from the fertile males and females, but from each other to such a degree that three castes sometimes exist. Westwood states that 'the inhabitants of the nest have the instinct so to modify the circumstances producing this state of imperfection that some neuters shall exhibit characters at variance with those of the common kind.' This credits them with a wonderful instinct, but it is the most probable explanation. Bees have the power, by difference of food, &c., of obtaining at will from the same eggs either queens or ordinary workers, and it is possible that ants act in like manner. In them we have animals so highly endowed that they may fairly claim to rank second to man in the scale of intelligence. They make roads so as to clear obstacles from their path; when necessary, they tunnel, and an observer in South America states that he has seen one under a river as broad as the Thames at London Bridge. They possess milch-cows (aphides), which they carefully tend and protect; for the winter, they lay up a store of provisions; they engage in sportive exercises, take part in mock-combats, and play hide-and-seek. Certain individuals of a genus found in Mexico serve as 'animated honey-pots' through having their abdomens greatly dilated. In some countries they thatch the entrances to their subterranean homes, thus pro-

tecting themselves from rain; while in others, leaves are used to form beds for mushrooms, which they cultivate and eat. In Texas, some plant, harvest, and store rice; and on these rice-fields nothing else is allowed to grow. Should the grain get wet it is brought up and dried.

The slave-making ants have been brought into a state of degradation through their weak nature; for they have lost their power of building, their domestic habits, their industry, and even the habit of feeding, as, when placed in the midst of plenty, they will rather starve than help themselves. The origin of slave-making must have arisen through the pupæ of other species stored as food becoming developed, and the foreign ants following their proper instinct, immediately proceeded to work, and in course of time, instead of collecting pupæ as food, they would store them for the sake of rearing slaves. It is possible that these slave-making ants will in the battle of life cease to survive, making way for others which have reached a higher stage of civilisation.

Ants removed from the nest in a state of larvæ will, if nursed by friends, be readmitted to the nest from which they were taken; and the result is similar even when they are tended by strangers. The pupæ of one nest tended by ants from another nest will, if placed when hatched in the nurse's nest, be savagely attacked. It has therefore been supposed that each nest must have a special signal or password; but we think the recognition must be due to smell; and although it is difficult to believe that each nest has a separate odour, yet we must remember that each human being possesses an odour peculiar to himself; for, otherwise, dogs could not track the footsteps of their masters.

The different species of ants present different conditions of life, curiously resembling the earlier stages of human progress. The '*Formica fusca*' live principally on the produce of the chase; they frequent woods, live in small communities, and hunt singly; their battles are single combats like those of the Homeric heroes. These ants probably retain the habits common to all ants. They resemble the lower races of men who subsist mainly by hunting. The '*Lasius flavus*' are a higher type; they have greater skill in architecture, and own domesticated milch-cows; their communities are larger, and they act in concert. They resemble pastoral man, who lives on the produce of his flocks and herds. Lastly, the harvesting ants represent the agricultural nations.

Whether there is or is not an absolute difference between instinct and intelligence is a moot-question. According to Herbert Spencer, instinct is but one of the first stages in the ascending evolution of the mind, and there is no real difference between instinct, memory, reason, &c.—these names being useful as a convenient method of grouping phenomena. Instinct is variable, so is intelligence. The latter is, as a rule, conscious, but sometimes becomes unconscious; and it is possible that the loftier instincts in the higher animals are accompanied by a confused consciousness. Actions which are frequently repeated become automatic—that is, instinctive or unconscious; one movement follows another in a sort of rhythm. If any one is



interrupted when reciting, he has to go back to recover the thread; so a caterpillar, if it has completed its hammock up to the third stage and is placed in one finished to the sixth, is unable to derive any benefit from the fact, for it has to go back to the point where it left off, and thus does work already completed.

The state of somnambulism is nearly akin to instinct in that the acts performed are unconsciously done, and are habitual ones: the poet writes verses, the musician composes music, and the philosopher describes philosophy. Cuvier says: 'We can gain a clear notion of instinct only by admitting that animals have in their sensorium images or constant sensations, which determine their action as ordinary and accidental sensations determine action in general. It is a sort of dream or vision which haunts them constantly; and so far as concerns their instinct, animals may be regarded as a kind of somnambulist.'

The mental faculties of animals have been described as instinctive, while those of man have been termed rational. Instinctive actions are mechanically performed; rational actions require a conscious effort of thought, and with thoughtful adaptation of means to ends. That man possesses certain instincts in common with the lower animals is admitted; but that animals possess reason in common with man is warmly denied. Modern discoveries all tend to prove that man is evolved from the animal kingdom. The comparative anatomy, physiology, and psychology of man and the other animals show how closely they are connected in conformation, organs, and functions; paleontology, the transformations and transitions of forms, and embryogeny, reveal the lower type whence they were evolved. The gaps between the fossil fauna and flora are important, but proofs are accumulating daily in support of this theory.

The perceptions act in the same way; the imagination and the emotions are likewise identical. The higher animals may be regarded as an undeveloped form of man; while man may be called a complex animal. One great cause of the difference between the reason of man and the reason of animals seems to be the fact that man possesses speech; and by speech we do not mean the mere faculty of articulating words, but that each word shall be a sign representing an idea. Deaf mutes reach a high stage of abstraction by means of an elaborate series of signs; parrots articulate, but do not understand what they say. It is true that animals are able to communicate with each other. The bark and the howl of the dog signify by their difference very different things; the fowl has a note for excitement, a cluck for maternal anticipation, and a shrill cry for warning.

'Intelligence,' says Ribot, 'is a mirror which reflects the universe. It is a wonderful instrument, and is in some cases infinite as the world itself which it encompasses and measures. By the accumulated progress of generations it tends to correspond more perfectly with its object. In its development through time and space and through the infinite variety of living creatures, it ever pursues its ideal—that is, to comprehend all things from common phenomena up to the eternal and sovereign laws of the Cosmos. In-

stinct is much more humble; it reflects the world only at a small angle; its relations are limited; it is adapted to a restricted medium; it is fitted only to a small number of circumstances. Instead of being an immense palace, whence a boundless horizon may be seen, it is a lowly cottage with only one window. But if we look at both, instinct and intelligence, from without, their processes are the same.' C. T. E.

## URGENT PRIVATE AFFAIRS.

BY RICHARD DOWLING,

AUTHOR OF 'THE MYSTERY OF WILLARD,' 'THE WEIRD SISTERS,' &c.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

### CHAP. I.—CROCODILES OF THE THAMES.

'I—I beg your pardon,' said a hesitating male voice.

The girl started, looked round, but saw no one.

'I'm on the wall,' said the male voice in apologetic tones.

She cast her eyes up. The head and shoulders of a light-haired young man, clad in flannels, appeared almost directly over her.

The young man mounted a rung higher on the ladder and said: 'I hope I haven't startled you? I was looking for something I had lost when I saw you. I spoke because I thought you might be frightened if you came on it unawares.'

'What is it?' she asked with great dignity, stepping back a pace, and tilting her cream-coloured umbrella further back over her dainty shoulder.

'Only my crocodile, Jacko.'

'What!' she cried, gathering her dress together and glancing round the ground with apprehension.

'Indeed,' said the young man penitently, 'you must not be alarmed. He's quite tame and very small, and he's almost blind. I bought him cheap—a damaged lot,' he added, laughing, to reassure the girl.

She looked at him in silent indignation. She was not accustomed to being addressed by strange young men, and she was accustomed to being treated with respect and deference—the respect and deference due to her age, eighteen.

'I am not joking,' said he; 'I would not think of doing such a thing. I'm awfully sorry; and I should not have spoken at all—I should not have dared—only I was afraid you might come on Jacko unexpectedly and be alarmed.'

She was mollified somewhat by the concern in the speaker's voice. 'A crocodile?' she said, condescending to admit wonder into her voice.

'Yes,' he said, bringing his chest above the wall by raising himself another rung on the ladder, this causing her to retreat another pace. 'But you really mustn't be afraid. He's only a very small chap. He never goes for people, you know.'

'I don't know,' said she stiffly. She had not been in a good humour at all when taking her solitary walk through these strange grounds, and this affair annoyed her; and this young man—although he seemed really sorry, was very easy

in his address, and should not use slang to her. He annoyed her too.

'Of course not,' said he very humbly. 'I mean he would not think of attacking people. I lost him at our side of the wall, and thought he might have got into Mr Bathurst's grounds through a hole or drain—there is an unbarred drain higher up. I'm very sorry for frightening you—I am indeed; and, of course, I couldn't be so rude as to make a joke about such a thing. If you only knew how distressed I am, you'd—you'd believe me,' he ended somewhat incoherently.

Miss Ellen Morton felt that here her dialogue with the unknown young man on the wall ought to end. She was in these grounds of Garwood House, on the Thames, twenty miles above London, for the first time in her life that day. She had no reason to believe that young men in flannels were desperadoes. Still propriety, with the strictest rules of which she was familiar, demanded that this dialogue should end.

But then a crocodile! No rule, of which she had ever even as much as heard, took into account the contingency of a crocodile at large. In historic times, anyway, a crocodile had never before entered into a situation of this kind on the banks of the Thames. It was easy for conventionality to say Go away. But whither? If she moved, she might be walking straight towards the odious reptile, or—worse still—might suddenly hear him running after her behind.

Plainly, it was impossible for her to move. She was not at all timid by nature. But before she came upon this adventure she had not been very happy. She stood still, glancing about her in shivering watchfulness.

'I don't know exactly what I ought to do,' said the young man on the wall in accents of perplexity. 'Mr Bathurst forbids people landing on his grounds from the river or getting over his walls or fences. He is death on trespassers.'

'Is he?' said she, feeling that it was a great pity this exclusiveness did not operate effectually against saurians.

'Oh yes. He's awfully particular about keeping every one out. If I might only slip over and stand beside you, you'd be all right, you know.'

It was hard for Ellen Morton, notwithstanding her eighteen years' experience in life, to deal with this speech. Here was a complete stranger talking in a reproachful tone of her host. This ought to be resented, although she had never met Mr Bathurst yet. Then there was the impudent assumption on the part of this young man that if he were only by her side she should be 'all right!' Still the speaker meant well. And then there was the dreadful thought of the lurking crocodile! She felt as though she must cry. Fancy her, Ellen Morton, crying like an ordinary silly girl! she who always held in scorn and contempt girls who cried for nothing! But, on the other hand, was a crocodile nothing? If she was sure this crocodile was nothing, she should not feel in the least inclined to cry. She should feel very indignant. Why had this young man spoken at all? Why had he not held his tongue, and allowed her to be torn asunder by the crocodile in peace?

'What—what am I to do?' she asked with a little quaver of pathos in her voice.

'Oh, pray, don't!' said he; and before she knew what was happening, he had swung himself over the top of the wall, dropped down, and was standing in front of her, and saying: 'I am sorry I spoke at all. I distressed you without any need. There was no danger from Jacko, except the danger of giving you a fright, if you saw him unexpectedly. And here have I terrified you and nearly made you cry. I'd give all the world,' he said desperately, 'I had held my tongue.'

'I am not going to cry, and I am not terrified,' she said, her dignity giving way before his manifest sincerity, and under the relief afforded by his presence. She turned towards the house, quarter of a mile distant, and began walking towards it.

'You see,' said he, 'I hadn't the least idea there was any one near when I got up the ladder. And, of course, I did not expect to find a lady here. Mrs Bathurst is never about the grounds, and I don't remember any other lady at Garwood.'

'I came only this morning.'

'You are not a member of the family?'

'No. I am not a relative; but I am going to stay a while.'

'Good gracious!' cried he with involuntary astonishment. 'Going to stay at Garwood House for a while!'

'Yes. Why are you astonished?' she asked, widening the distance between them as they walked.

'Oh, nothing,' he said in momentary confusion, and then foundered a moment, and then partly recovered himself. 'I'm sure I beg your pardon; only, you know, you are so unlike Mr Bathurst, I thought you could not be closely related. You must think me very rude to ask. I assure you I did not mean to frighten you, and I didn't mean to be rude; and it is horribly awkward about the crocodile.'

She smiled. His compunction was disarming, engaging. He almost required protection from himself. 'You did not do or say anything so very dreadful. Of course, it is awkward to have the crocodile wandering about, and a pity you lost your—pet.'

'Oh, that's no consequence at all,' said he. 'I wish he were at the bottom of the Red Sea.'

'A crocodile,' said she, with another smile, 'is a fresh-water creature.'

The young man said nothing; he merely made an impatient gesture, as if he were dismissing the reptile to still more unsuitable depths.

'And as to asking me if I were related to Mr Bathurst, there was no harm in that, for I do not know him, have never seen him yet.'

'What!' he cried, pulling up suddenly and staring at her in consternation. 'You don't know him! You haven't seen him! Why, this is worse than anything! This is the worst of all!'

The girl looked at him with displeasure and suspicion. 'What is the matter now?—I can see the house from this. Thank you for your escort so far. Will you not come in?' She moved her hand in formal invitation, but voice and manner conveyed his dismissal.

'To the house?' said he in amazement. 'Oh no, thank you. I am dreadfully afraid you may

not know much, may not know anything about Mr Bathurst!

This was really going too far. 'I must thank you for your kindness and say good-day,' said she frigidly, bowing.

'Oh, pray don't speak in that way. I wouldn't offend you for the world; but I fear you do not know much about Mr Bathurst, and may tell him about—about me and Jacko'— He paused, unable to go on.

'Well?' she asked mercilessly, and conveying grave reproof for the bare notion of making a secret of this meeting.

'Oh! well, indeed, you mustn't tell anything about it to Mr Bathurst, or, I think, to Mrs Bathurst either.—You may well look insulted and astonished; but I assure you I am speaking only to prevent a horrid mess. You don't know that Mr Bathurst has a nickname in the City?—No. I felt you couldn't have heard. How could you? It's horribly unkind and beastly, but—but they call him the Crocodile.'

'What!—And your story of the escaped creature?'

'Oh, believe me, that is quite true. Indeed, indeed, every word I have told you is quite true. It was Mr Bathurst's nickname made me think of buying Jacko, and Jacko really got out of his basket just before I saw you first. Mr Bathurst does not at all like his nickname, and if you told him about me, it would be most unpleasant. I don't care what you may tell him about me, but, for goodness' sake, don't mention the crocodile. If you mention the crocodile, he may think—he may think—I don't know what he may think. But you can see it would be very awkward for you to say anything about a crocodile at your first meeting.' The young man took off his cap. 'I'll watch you safe into the house from this. Jacko must surely be at the other side of the wall. I shall write you to say I have recovered him, so that you may not be afraid to walk about the grounds—that is, if you will tell me to whom a letter for you should be addressed. You see, I can't write to Mr Bathurst or his mother about Jacko; and I couldn't bear to think my carelessness was the means of keeping you in endless dread.'

'My name is Morton,' she said with dignity, and then, with grave politeness and a bow: 'Good-day, and thank you.'

'And my name is George Chaytor.—Good-day.' He bent his bare head, and then raising it, watched the figure of the girl cross the lawn and enter Garwood House. Then, forgetting that he still held his cap in his hand, he plodded back to the boundary wall with eyes bent on the ground and in complete forgetfulness of the whole reptile creation.

A year back Nellie Morton had left school and gone to live with her gentle, sympathetic, childless, maternal aunt Sophie, wife of Colonel Pickering, in Deighton, a quiet garrison town of the south. This June morning her uncle had left her at Garwood House, bidding her final adieu. She was the only child of the widower, Christopher Morton, civil engineer, now residing in Brazil. Mr Bathurst was Morton's business man in London. When Colonel Pickering was ordered abroad, Mr Bathurst's mother wrote to Brazil, offering the girl a home at Garwood House.

Mr Morton replied, thanking Mrs Bathurst for her kindness to his motherless daughter, and saying he should be home for good in the autumn, as he had now made enough for himself and his girl. He had been far from well, but was then much better, almost as well as ever.

Nellie had never seen Mrs Bathurst until this morning, and the interview had proved anything but reassuring to the young girl. Mrs Bathurst was short and very stout, about seventy years of age, with dark, peering, inscrutable eyes, and a heavy portentous manner and delivery. She was not tall or thin or haggard enough for a witch. She looked a dark, unwieldy sorceress.

When bluff, outspoken Colonel Pickering had resigned Nellie into the hands of her new guardian and taken his leave, the old woman said: 'Child, I cannot get about easily. As soon as you have seen your room and taken off your things, come back here. I wish to talk to you.' The tone was not one of request or command; but of a person accustomed to speak and find the words carried into acts as inevitably and automatically as one's limbs obey one's will.

Nellie returned from her room subdued and awed by the gloom of this vast silent house, dark throughout, despite the white sunlight of June morning shining abroad on wood and river and field.

'Take a chair, Ellen,' said Mrs Bathurst as though Miss Morton was the new housemaid, for some unwelcome reason privileged to be seated in the presence of the mistress. 'You will find this place dull. There are the grounds to walk in, and books in the library. I am practically an invalid, although I suffer from no ailment or pain. I never cross the threshold of this house. A young lady cannot walk on country roads alone; you will be obliged to make the most of the grounds, for we keep no horses. We entertain no company. We breakfast at half-past seven, lunch at two, and dine at half-past six. My son is the soul of punctuality. He never varies a minute—never half a minute. Go, explore the grounds between this and luncheon; a bell will ring a quarter of an hour before it is ready.'

Nellie felt far from comfortable as she entered the dreary, hollow, resounding house after her interview with George Chaytor. That great desolate house had oppressed her like a portentous cloud. The meeting with Mrs Bathurst had filled her with tremulous misgivings and vague chilling fears, never even suspected before in her clear, bright, open, happy life. For the first time she now had a secret—she was to say nothing about that incident at the boundary wall. It was a poor, paltry, mean, unhand-some secret, connected with the trivial circumstance of her meeting with that young man, and learning the lowering fact that her father's business man, whom she had never seen and under whose roof she now lived, was known by an uncomplimentary and damaging nickname.

She would have repelled with scorn the idea that there was anything romantic or even interesting in her encounter with young Chaytor. Such a thought could not have occurred to her, and no one was by to suggest it. She had been startled by hearing his voice from the wall. She

had been alarmed at the notion that a hideous reptile might be within reach of her; and she had been disgusted at learning that Mr Bathurst, whom her father and aunt and uncle always spoke of with respect as the custodian and wise investor of her father's fortune, should be treated with such want of feeling and courtesy as to be named after the most loathsome of reptiles.

Mrs Bathurst and Garwood House had filled her with inexpressible fears. She deplored but could not help this. No doubt in time she should overcome these unpleasant feelings. One thing she could do, and that one thing she would do, namely, to yield Mrs Bathurst constant and dutiful respect.

She remained in her room until the bell rang for luncheon. With what alarming shrillness the sound tore through the weird quiet of that lonely house! She wondered, did that clangorous bell peal through the corridors when the old woman was alone? or had it been set going to honour or terrify the guest? It made her shudder to think of rousing all the far-off sleeping echoes of this sombre house for two lonely women.

Luncheon was served in the large dining-room, on the left of the front entrance hall. Here, notwithstanding the brightness and warmth of the day, all was dim and damp. The heavy dark oak furniture, upholstered in deep purple leather, was moist and chilly to the touch. The air of the room was moist, not with the sweet moisture of leafy June, but with faint mouldy exhalations from the banquets of buried generations. The dark wainscoted walls seemed to stand back in sullen distance from the shrunken dining-table. The room looked out upon the front lawn, and the cloth was laid at the end farthest from the curtained windows. Bright as the summer day was, it seemed as though lamps would be indispensable—they would have been regarded with pleasure by any one not morbidly enamoured of gloom.

Mrs Bathurst was standing at the back of the room when Nellie entered. 'Ha!' she said, moving across the floor with difficulty and apparent pain and great slowness, because of her unwieldy bulk. 'You are punctual, child. That is right; we are very punctual in this house.'

The meal was served, and the two women sat down. The parlour maid who attended the table was middle-aged, stolid, stupid-looking. For a long time no word was spoken. Nellie felt glad of this. She did not desire conversation. The desolate genius of this house had begun to work, and was filling with shadowy terrors this girl, who up to that time had lived her life unafraid.

Mrs Bathurst ate little, and Nellie had no appetite at all. Mrs Bathurst made no pretence of entertaining her visitor. She spoke such words as were necessary in the progress of the meal, and now and then bent her inscrutable eyes on her guest. She did not look at the girl as though she wished to see her. Those sorceress eyes never betrayed any thought or emotion. They were the outward organs of a spirit always occupied on itself within. They peered at the girl, but did not stare at her. They did not make Nellie uncomfortable about herself,

as do eyes which stare; but they set her wondering in chilled awe what could this strange old woman be contemplating that made her look so weird.

No pleasant or cheerful thoughts were at the disposal of the girl. Her life up to that day had been one of peaceful happiness at school, and of delicious awakening amid sympathetic surroundings at Deighton, in the society of her soft-mannered, affectionate aunt, and the hearty, outspoken, chivalrous, kind-hearted Colonel. The twelve months spent with her aunt had been a time of complete happiness. No one moment had been marred by unpleasantness of any kind. She loved her gracious and affectionate aunt as she might her mother, if that mother had been spared; and her courteous, honest uncle as though he were the father far away in Brazil, who was no more to her than the beneficent figure of a dream.

This strange gloomy house and this strange mysterious woman had struck into Nellie's young heart the first chill she had ever experienced. She already had the feeling of being in a prison, and she found the air of the house thickening in her throat and suffocating her. She was alone now, in such a solitude as she had never conceived before. She was not to see the Pickerings again; she had stayed with them until the very last moment. If she were to obey her impulse, she would there and then flee from that house; but she was more helpless than a child. She had never yet acted for herself in any affair of consequence. With the disposition to fly, she felt flight was as impossible as though she were fettered with irons a thousand pounds in weight.

The girl was not of a nervous or fanciful nature. She was blithesome and light of heart. She had never known the luxury of a grievance. Her disposition was to look at the cheerful side of things. She had never been ill since the ailments of childhood. She could not believe her present condition of depression and apprehensiveness was the result of spending a few hours in this gloomy house with this silent and self-absorbed old woman. The girl was beginning to think her health must be failing her.

At the end of luncheon the old woman pushed away her plate, and keeping her unfathomable eyes on Nellie, said, with startling unexpectedness: 'What change has come over you since morning? You are not the same. Did you not find the grounds interesting? Have you lighted on no books to your liking in the library?'

The girl could not have been more astonished if one of the grim carved heads in the black oak chimney-piece had addressed her. She had been thinking that if she came into the room and sat down at the table with her hat on, Mrs Bathurst would not notice anything unusual in her appearance; and that if she had fainted or fallen off her chair, Mrs Bathurst would have contented herself with summoning a servant and giving orders that Miss Morton should be carried to her room and attended to. And here was her hostess showing herself, on this very short acquaintance, able to detect a slight alteration in manner or appearance.

'I think the grounds are beautiful,' said Nellie,



when she had recovered from her astonishment sufficiently to be able to speak.

'And you have not been to the library yet?'

'No; I reserved that pleasure for after luncheon.'

'Ah! I hope you may find the library a pleasure. I don't think you took any benefit from the grounds to-day. I hope none of those audacious boating-parties landed and disturbed your walk?'

'No; I did not see any boating-party.' This answer was given with extreme reluctance. It was of course truthful, but it was not the whole truth.

'You are keeping something back from me,' said the old woman; 'but you need not tell me. I am not interested. I do not ask you what. If I wanted to know, you would tell me, but I do not want to know.'

### A UNIQUE REPUBLIC.

Not many persons are aware—or, at least, remember what they may have learned incidentally at some time or other—that between the two kingdoms of France and Spain there lies a Republican community, which has been to some extent associated with the history of both nations, but has been unaffected by the political vicissitudes of either. Among the mountains which separate these two great nations there is a valley which reaches to the French frontier on the one side, and to the borders of Catalonia on the other. This is the Valley of Andorra, in which, for eleven centuries, has dwelt undisturbed probably the most remarkable community in the world. In this Pyrenean valley has rested in practical oblivion, in undisturbed repose, and in a state of independence secured in a unique manner, a Republic, which, through centuries of feudal conquest and disorder, of dynastic change and national revolution, of social upheaval and political reformation, of religious change and intellectual development, has preserved its own manners, its own ideas, its own laws, its own language, its own civil and political organisations, and its own religious opinions and practices, absolutely without alteration or admixture. As it was in the days of Charlemagne, so, one may say, is Andorra to-day. Surely this is a sufficiently startling anachronism at the close of the nineteenth century to merit a little attention and study.

The geographical position of Andorra has been its salvation. Away up among the Pyrenees—not, perhaps, among the very highest and steepest summits, such as the Canigou or the Mont-Perdu, but among the more closely-packed masses where the valleys are narrower and the passes more dangerous—it is situated in a region which is impassable during some parts of the year. It is far away from the regular routes of communication between France and Spain, and outside the lines which invading armies going in either direction must follow. The people, simple in character and rustic in occupation, have never had any foreign sympathies, and have kept themselves in a marvellous degree free from foreign influence. They are poor, and their lands are

mostly pastoral, so there has been nothing to tempt either the ambition or the avarice of their neighbours. By a strange combination of circumstances, indeed, the Republic of Andorra, which is also a feudal State, is able to present to modern society an organism which has neither progressed nor retrograded for a thousand years, and which links us with a long-past ante-feudal society.

To Charlemagne the Andorrans are fond of attributing their independence. The long lines of French and Spanish kings are to them but as idle tales, and it is doubtful if any outside political entity has impressed itself on the Andorran mind save only that of the Great Napoleon. The news of his battles alone seem to have penetrated to Andorra, and to have made an impression on the Andorrans, not so much because of the dynastic and national interests involved, as because Napoleon restored the Convention which had been renounced by the French Republic. This Convention was part of the ancient constitution of Andorra; and Napoleon restored it because he regarded Andorra as too curious an organism to be effaced without reason.

Andorra is not only itself a wild and roadless country, but it is surrounded on all sides by wild and roadless country. There is not a single highway leading into it on either side, and the mule-paths through mountain-passes are closed for long portions of the year.

To reach it from France, one starts from the quaint old town of Vicdessos, in the department of the Ariège, itself some two thousand feet above the sea. The path is rough, rocky, and crooked to about a height of eight thousand feet to the Port du Rat, from which the descent is equally rough and more precipitous, through a wild and desolate region, to Serrat, the frontier village of Andorra. This is a whole day's journey on horseback, or muleback, and the traveller may think himself fortunate who reaches the Andorran village before nightfall, otherwise he may make acquaintance with either brigands or wolves.

Serrat is picturesque enough as to situation, but is a wretched hamlet, shut in by the mountains, without any inn—there is only one inn in Andorra, and that is in the capital—without even a spare bed or decent food. There are about a dozen houses built of rough stone, without mortar and without windows, and a small rude church.

A journey of four hours will bring the traveller to Andorra town—Andorra-la-Vella—the capital of the country, where is a plain but decent hostelry. This is a place of about seven hundred inhabitants, and here it may be noted that the entire population of the whole State—which is some twenty-eight miles long by twenty miles broad at its longest and broadest—does not exceed six thousand.

Andorra-la-Vella contains the Parliament House of the Republic, a building almost as old, and certainly as quaint, as its institutions. Here the Council-General hold their sittings, and here are kept the State records, in an armoury with six locks, one for each commune, a representative of which carries the key, so that the precious documents can only be reached in the presence of representatives of all the communes.

This Council-General is the governing body, and is composed of twenty-four members—four

representatives from each of the six provinces, or communes, into which the country is divided. These representatives are chosen from among the men of most substance in each commune, and are elected by the heads of families—namely, the householders. Two 'Consuls' are elected every year; in the second year they become 'Councillors'; in the third year, 'Caps-Grossos,' an honorary office without a seat in the Council; and in the fourth year they are eligible for re-election as 'Consuls.' Thus the Parliament never dies, and is never dissolved, and there is no such thing as a general election.

The elected members of the Council-General elect the President and Vice-President not from their own numbers, but from outside. These are termed First and Second Syndics, who are not paid, and who may be turned out of office at any time by a vote of the Council. A Secretary is also elected by vote, and he is the only paid official.

It is sufficiently remarkable to find this system of representative government and democratic institutions existing in an aristocratic and feudal State for over a thousand years; for the system to-day is as it was confirmed by the charter of Louis the Pious; but it is still more remarkable to find in Andorra a perfect system of Home Rule of equal antiquity.

Each of these six communes has also a Parliament of its own—a Communal Council, whose functions are to attend to purely local affairs. They have to manage the communal lands, look after the roads and bridges, preserve order, and give a general superintendence to the industries of their districts. Five of these communes, again, are divided into Quarters, or Cuarts, each with its own Council, elected by the householders, with similar functions in a more limited area. These Provincial and Quarter Councils have no power to levy taxes. Their revenue is derived from the rents of communal lands and woods, out of which they defray expenses and contribute a certain annual amount to the Council-General for the expenses of the State.

The State expenses are practically limited to the tributes paid to Spain and France and the insignificant expenses of the Central Parliament. A government official in each district makes out annually a list of the men who have any property, and of the crops and herds upon the farms; and upon the basis of this return the only tax known in Andorra is assessed. Whatever other public revenue there is, is derived from the rents of the public lands and from forest rights to cut wood.

The Syndics of the Council-General are designated 'Illustrious,' and the First Syndic holds the executive power. There are no written laws to guide him; there is no foreign policy to trouble him; there is no public debt to tax his ingenuity as a financier; there is no annual Budget requiring dexterity in the manipulation of figures and in the anticipation of debits and credits; and there are no Acts of Parliament to be framed or opposed. He has simply to preside over the assembly to see that its deliberations and decisions are conducted in accordance with precedents and time-honoured rules. When any question arises as to custom or precedent, it is decided by the Illustrious Syndic after conference with the Caps-Grossos (or

experienced Councillors), whose duties are to see that no infringement of ancient right or breach of traditional custom shall occur.

While the Andorrans have thus an absolute democratic government, the administration of justice partakes of the old feudal association. The judicial power is exercised by two magistrates called Veguers, who are appointed by the Co-Princes—that is to say, France names one and Spain another. These are not only Magistrates, but, as representing the Co-Princes, have the chief command of the Andorran army or militia, although for the purpose of preserving internal law and order only.

Minor cases, and the first processes in civil cases, are dealt with by Bailiffs appointed by the Veguers, but all serious cases go before the Veguers, or Tribunal de Corts. There is a third officer of justice, a civil judge of appeals, who is appointed for life, and is nominated alternately by the Bishop of Urgel and the French government. He presides at the supreme tribunal to which appeals are carried. In extreme cases there is right of appeal, as a last extremity, to the Co-Prince by whom the sitting judge of appeals was appointed; but this is seldom resorted to.

The salaries of the judges and all the costs of the courts are paid by the litigants; and when the fees are insufficient the balance is made up out of the State funds.

Mention has been made of the army. This is composed of all the able-bodied heads of families, and nominally amounts to six hundred men. Each soldier must provide his own gun; and every householder is bound to keep on hand always a certain amount of ammunition for use when required. This militia is liable to be called to arms at any time; but as a matter of fact, the liability has seldom been enforced to its full extent. They are not paid, and have neither uniform, accoutrements, flags, nor bands.

Such, then, are the institutions of this remarkable State and primitive people, who present to us a type of character and custom absolutely without change for ten centuries. There is surely no other community in the world where one can find the same habits and usages as obtained in the time of the immortal Charlemagne.

Almost perfect as a political organism, Andorra, however, has been stagnant as a society. The people live in the same simple, primitive manner as their forefathers—cultivating the ground and attending to their flocks and herds, but wholly indifferent to education or the advancement of civilisation. They are pious, after the manner of medieval religionists, and it is believed that no Andorran has ever embraced the Protestant faith. They have had neither backslidings nor 'revivals,' and are alike strangers to agnosticism and fanaticism.

The country is remarkably picturesque—a series of fertile valleys surrounded by wild and savage mountains. Through the chief valley flows the river Valira into Spain, and along the banks of this river are situated the principal villages. Six of these only are of any size, even as villages, and they are the chief towns of the several communes. There are a score or so of small hamlets, irregularly built, without any attempt at street-making, and with no appliances for lighting. The houses—with some very few exceptions belonging to the

wealthier citizens—are small and poor, of barn-like and comfortless appearance. They are built of rough stone without mortar, as there is no chalk in the country, and many of them are without glass windows. The ground floor is used for storage and for the housing of the live-stock, and the living-rooms are above.

There are some small lakes, which are well fished by the people; and there is game in the mountains, even game of the larger and more dangerous kinds, such as bears and wild-boars, not to mention wolves and eagles. The Andorrans are all sportsmen after a fashion, and some few of them are smugglers, but the most of them are engaged in agriculture or in timber-felling.

Perhaps the most important industry is the breeding and rearing of mules for the Spanish markets; and next to that, the felling of timber both for domestic use and for sale in Spain, to which it is floated down the Valira. This timber is felled in the mountain forests which belong to the State or commune, and one of the principal sources of revenue is in the licenses, or rents, for tree-cutting.

The arable farms are small in extent, and produce fair crops of wheat, rye, maize, haricot beans, potatoes, and vegetables. Tobacco is grown to a considerable extent, but is not very skilfully manufactured. Most of it is exported to Spain, as is also the surplus fruit, such as walnuts, chestnuts, apples, and pears.

The few imports required by the Andorrans come for the most part from France, one of the rights of the community being to draw from the department of the Ariège all the merchandise it requires without payment of Customs dues.

As a matter of fact, Andorra requires a great many things, but she has so little to offer in exchange that her foreign trade is practically *nil*. She has no Customs tariff herself, and the profits of the Andorran smugglers are made in running the gantlet of the Spanish *douaniers*. She has, however, considerable mineral deposits, which might be developed if she had the means and the energy to make canals and construct machinery; and there are also numerous thermal and mineral springs which may, in some more or less distant future, be transformed into health-resorts. At present they are quite neglected, like most of the natural riches of the country. Perhaps in time the industrial awakening of Spain may extend to this Republic of the mountains, but even Spain is yet far behind the rest of Europe in many things.

Meanwhile, however, Andorra remains at once an example and a warning—admirable in its political institutions, in the law-abiding and industrious character of its people, in its freedom from crime and strife; deplorable in its stagnation and backwardness. It is a land without a literature, and almost without education. There are a few elementary schools of a humble type, and all the people are bound by law to know Catalan, of which the Andorran language is a variant. But they do not read, and there is not a library in the whole Republic. There is not even a newspaper; and only a few of the wealthier inhabitants think of subscribing to French or Spanish newspapers. They are not a very musical people, and there is not a piano in the whole country. They are not given to out-

door recreations, like their neighbours of France and Spain, and public entertainments are unknown. They do not care for flowers or pictures, and would as soon think of flying as of cultivating roses to look at. An Andorran artist has not yet been evolved, nor, apparently, an Andorran mechanician. It is a curious fact that, beyond a few saw-mills and a small weaving-mill, there is no machinery of any kind in the State. Steam is an unapplied force, and electricity a thing as yet undreamed of. Needless to say there is neither railway nor telegraph; there is not even a wheeled vehicle of any kind, for there is not a road on which one could be moved. There is not even an Andorran currency, for the people use the coins of France and Spain, as also the postage stamps, with equal indifference.

A gentleman who has lived much among them tells us that the Andorrans, although not what we call educated, are a religious, well-conducted, peace-loving, and temperate people, sensible and clear-headed up to the point of their own requirements, reserved and taciturn, but wholly trustworthy. They are contented with their lot, and proud of their independence; and yet, perhaps, that independence has been their misfortune. It leaves them in the ninth century, although of the nineteenth.

## THE WEDDING RING.

WEDDING rings have been worn in all ages; but no information respecting their origin can be discovered. It is known they were used by the ancient Greeks and Romans; but their use was then at the ceremony of betrothal, and not marriage. Pope Nicholas, writing of the ninth century, says that the Christians first presented the woman with espousal gifts, including a ring, which was placed on her finger; the dowry was then agreed on; and afterwards came the nuptial service. These rings of the Romans were made of various metals, as iron, brass, copper, and gold; and while betrothal and marriage were distinct, the rings were ornamented; but when formal betrothal became obsolete, the marriage ring took a plain shape, as at present.

The ancients wore the betrothal ring, as now, on the next least finger of the left hand. Many reasons are assigned for this, as the erroneous idea that a vein or nerve went direct to the heart, and therefore the outward sign of matrimony should be placed in connection with the seat of life: the left hand is a sign of inferiority or subjection: the left hand is less employed than the right, and the finger next least the best protected. At one time, it was the custom to place the wedding ring on the right hand of the bride. The Anglo-Saxon bridegroom at the betrothal gave a *veed* or pledge, and a ring was placed on the maiden's right hand, where it remained till marriage, and was then transferred to the left.

During the times of George I. and II. the wedding ring, though placed upon the usual finger at the time of marriage, was sometimes worn on the thumb, in which position it is often seen on the portraits of the titled ladies in those days. It is now absolutely necessary to use a ring at the English marriage service. The placing of the ring on the book is a remnant of

the ancient custom of blessing the ring by sprinkling holy water in the form of a cross. This is still done by the Roman Catholic priest. The Puritans attempted the abolition of the ring. The Quakers don't use a ring at the service because of its heathenish origin; but many wear them afterwards. The Swiss Protestants do not use a ring either at the service or afterwards.

Rings have not necessarily been made of gold, in order to be used in the English service. They may be of any metal or size. At Worcester, some years ago, a registrar was threatened with proceedings for not compelling the use of a gold ring. At Colchester, at the beginning of this century, the church key took the place of the ring; and this has been the case elsewhere. A story is told of a couple going to church and requesting the use of the church key. The clerk, not thinking it lawful, fetched a curtain ring, which was used at the ceremony. The Duke of Hamilton was married at Mayfair with a bed-curtain ring. *Notes and Queries* of October 1860 relates the cutting of a leather ring from the gloves of the bridegroom and the use of it at the service. An Indian clergyman stopped a wedding because the ring contained a diamond; and in Ireland all rings except plain gold ones are rigidly forbidden.

One of the earliest forms of rings was the gemel or gimmel ring. It was a twin or double ring, composed of two or more interlaced links, which turned upon a hinge or pivot. These links could be shut up into one solid ring. Each hoop had one convex, and the other flat side; when the two flat sides were in contact, the links formed one ring. Mottoes and devices were often engraved on the inner or flat side. At the time of betrothal, it was customary for the man to put his finger through one hoop, and the woman through the other. They were thus symbolically yoked together. The links were then broken, and the two kept a link until the marriage. Some gimmel rings with three links were made for the purpose of a witness keeping the middle one. There is a gimmel containing nine links still in existence. A gold one given by Edward Seymour to Lady Katharine Grey had five links and a poesy of his own composition.

The *Exeter Garland*, written in 1750, contains:

A ring of pure gold she from her finger took,  
And just in the middle the same then she broke;  
Quoth she: 'As a token of love, you this take;  
And this is a pledge I will keep for your sake.'

Wedding rings, also, were not always worn plain, the common emblem being clasped hands or hearts. Two silver-gilt rings were used for the marriage of Martin Luther and Catherine von Borgia. Luther's ring is still in Saxony, and bears the following: 'D. Martino Luthero, Catherina v. Borgia, 13 Junii 1525.' The other is in Paris, and has a figure of Christ upon the cross, and the Latin inscription as above. On the ring given by Henry VIII. to Anne of Cleves was inscribed, 'God send me well to kepe,' in allusion to the fate of Anne Boleyn. Lady Cathcart, on her fourth marriage in 1713, had the following: 'If I survive, I will have five.' Dr John Thomas, Bishop of Lincoln, 1753, had a similar inscription.

Many superstitions attach to the wedding ring, probably arising from the Roman Catholic custom of its receiving the blessing of the priest before putting it on. In Ireland, the rubbing of the ring on a wart or sore was sure to cure it; also, the belief still remains that by pricking a wart with a gooseberry-bush thorn through a wedding ring it will gradually disappear. In Somersetshire they say that a sty on the eyelid may be removed by the rubbing of the ring. The Romans believed a peculiar virtue lay in the ring finger, and they stirred their medicines with it. Another superstition is that if a wife lose her ring, she will also lose her husband's love; and if she breaks it, the husband will shortly die. Many married women would not remove their rings, for fear of the death of their partners. An old saying is, 'As your wedding ring wears, your cares will wear away.'

#### THE WORLD AND THE POET.

A BIRD sang out in the meadows,  
And took of the ripening grain;  
But the people grudged their barley,  
And the golden-throat was slain.

A poet brake into music,  
Striking the silvern chords;  
But the people whispered together,  
As they gazed on their glittering hoards:

'Where is the substance of music?  
What is the value of song?  
A breath and a wail and an echo  
Out of the heart of the throng;

'A breath that would stir our patience,  
The wail of a sometime wrong,  
The echo of deeds heroic,  
A-throb with the passion of song.

'We were sent for the sowing and reaping,  
The labouring early and late;  
We are striving, and jostling, and crowding  
At Fortune's narrowing gate.

'We dare not linger to listen,  
We dare not hearken the song,  
Lest we turn our thoughts from the winning,  
And are pushed aside by the strong.'

So the people whispered together  
Over their piles of gold,  
And looked askance at the singer,  
Bare-throated, a-hungred, and cold.

He took up the lyre and brake it,  
Brake it across his knee,  
And despair sat chill on his shoulder  
As he laboured out on the lea.

But the people laughed in the market,  
Applauding the wiser choice—  
And a world was stayed in its progress  
For lack of that silent voice.

C. A. DAWSON.

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